

UNCLASSIFIED

E13

CONFIDENTIAL

PTQ4328

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

PAGE 01 CARACA 02957 01 OF 02 241550Z
ACTION INR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	OIGO-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	ACE-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/003W
-----EC1AA7 241631Z /38							

R 241511Z SEP 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7818
INFO NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002957

NSC FOR LLORENS, AMB. MAISTO
INR FOR FERNANDEZ
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
AID/DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/12
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, EAID, VE
SUBJECT: APURE'S IN DIRE STRAITS, BUT POLITICALLY CALM

CLASSIFIED BY DCM FREDERICK B. COOK FOR REASONS 1.5
(B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 02957 01 OF 02 241550Z

1. (C) DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) GOVERNS APURE, AND CHAVISMO IS ITS SERIOUS RIVAL, BUT THEIR RESPECTIVE MARCHES ON SEPTEMBER 20 PASSED WITHOUT INCIDENT. THE LARGE AND SPARSELY POPULATED PLAINS STATE DEPENDS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON CARACAS FOR ITS ECONOMIC SURVIVAL. GOVERNOR LUIS LIPPA (AD) SAID THAT HE GETS JUST ENOUGH MONEY FROM THE FINANCE MINISTRY TO MEET MOST NEEDS. SHARING A LONG BORDER WITH COLOMBIA AND HAVING MANY REMOTE AREAS, APURE MUST COPE WITH A HOST OF PROBLEMS, INCLUDING GUERRILLA GROUPS, KIDNAPPING, POORLY DEVELOPED INFRASTRUCTURE, AND DESPERATE POVERTY. END SUMMARY.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

A TRIP TO THE LLANOS

2. (U) ON SEPTEMBER 19, POLOFF TRAVELED TO SAN FERNANDO DE APURE, CAPITAL OF APURE, THE LARGE AND SPARSELY POPULATED (AROUND 500,000) PLAINS STATE THAT SHARES A LONG BORDER WITH COLOMBIA. GOVERNOR LUIS LIPPA (DEMOCRATIC ACTION) SAID SEPTEMBER 19 THAT, WITH AN ANNUAL BUDGET OF ABOUT \$40 MILLION--ALL FUNDED DIRECTLY FROM CARACAS--HE HAS JUST ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY HIS EMPLOYEES, BUT NOT RETIREES. LIPPA IS NONETHELESS PROUD THAT HE GOT THE SCHOOLS TO OPEN ON TIME, A FEAT FEW STATES HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS YEAR. LIPPA GRIPEd THAT, UNLIKE CHAVISTA GOVERNORS, HE HAS NO ACCESS TO CHAVEZ. (HE CAN MEET WITH FINMIN NOBREGA, BUT "HE NEVER SOLVES MY PROBLEMS.") IF CHAVEZ WERE TO MEET HIM AND SERIOUSLY WORK OUT THE STATE'S BUDGET

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 02957 01 OF 02 241550Z
PROBLEMS, LIPPA INSISTED HE'D HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT. WITH ONLY \$30 MILLION MORE, LIPPA SIGHED, HE COULD EXPLOIT APURE'S MANY NATURAL RESOURCES AND "TURN IT INTO A SHOW PLACE."

3. (U) UNLIKE CARACAS, QUIET APURE HAS NO POLITICAL PROBLEMS TO SPEAK OF, LIPPA INSISTED. JUST SO: HIS PARTY AD CONTROLS ALL SEVEN OF THE STATE'S MUNICIPALITIES. CHAVEZ'S FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT (MVR) IS TRYING TO GET A RECALL AMENDMENT AGAINST HIM, "BUT IT WON'T WORK." THEY SET UP A STOREFRONT DOWNTOWN TO COLLECT SIGNATURES, LIPPA RELATED, BUT ONLY MANAGED LESS THAN 100. LIPPA NEVERTHELESS REMARKED THAT SOME "BOLIVARIAN MILITIAS" HAD SET UP TRAINING CAMPS IN THE STATE, BUT DIDN'T SPECIFY WHERE OR HOW MANY PEOPLE MIGHT BE INVOLVED.

THE DAY OF THE MARCHES

4. (U) THE TWO MARCHES ON SEPTEMBER 20 OCCURRED WITHOUT INCIDENT. DESPITE DIRE PREDICTIONS BY LIPPA, IBANEZ AND OTHERS, THE CHAVISTAS DID NOT BLOCK THE OPPOSITION MARCHERS PATH. THIS MARCH WAS PURELY A LOCAL AFFAIR. AS FOR THE OPPOSITION MARCH, IT WAS SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN THE CHAVISTAS' (5-6,000 TO THE CHAVISTAS' 3,000) AND WAS LED BY A FEW MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION'S SECOND TIER LEADERSHIP (SERGIO OMAR CALDERON OF COPEI AND ALBERTO FRANCESCHI OF AD.) THE MOST TELLING INCIDENT, OR NON-INCIDENT, OF THE DAY: AS THE CHAVISTAS PASSED A LARGE OPPOSITION SOUNDSTAGE

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

BLARING OUT ANTI-CHAVISTA FOLK SONGS, THE OPPOSITION'S
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 02957 01 OF 02 241550Z
DEEJAY DEDICATED ONE TO THEM, "WITH AFFECTION." THE
CHAVISTAS BARELY TOOK NOTICE OF HER OR THE SONGS.

A TALK WITH MAYOR IBANEZ

5. (U) FREDDY IBANEZ, THE AD MAYOR OF SAN FERNANDO, WAS
SLIGHTLY MORE UPBEAT THAN LIPPA BECAUSE HE IS MORE IN
CONTROL OF HIS REVENUE BASE. UNLIKE THE STATE, WHICH DOES
NOT HAVE THE POWER TO TAX, THE MUNICIPALITY CAN TAX
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY, VEHICLES, PUBLIC EVENTS, AND
HOMEOWNERS FOR GARBAGE PICKUP. THE RECENT RELEASE OF
MACROECONOMIC STABILIZATION FUND MONEY FOR MUNICIPALITIES
HAS HELPED THEM MAKE ENDS MEET, BUT IBANEZ STILL CLAIMED
THAT OVER 90 PERCENT OF HIS BUDGET IS DEDICATED TO PAYING
MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES. IBANEZ ADDED THAT HE'S HAD NO LUCK ON
RECEIVING ANY SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDING FROM
INTERGOVERNMENTAL FUND FOR DECENTRALIZATION (FIDE) AND HAS
HAD LITTLE SUCCESS ON COORDINATING THE USE OF SCANT
RESOURCES WITH HIS ADECO COLLEAGUE LIPPA.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ4329

PAGE 01 CARACA 02957 02 OF 02 241550Z
ACTION INR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DODE-00 WHA-00
SRPP-00 DS-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00
ACE-00 EPAE-00 DSCC-00 PRM-00 DRL-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00
/003W

-----EC1AB6 241631Z /38

R 241511Z SEP 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7819
INFO NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 002957

NSC FOR LLORENS, AMB. MAISTO
INR FOR FERNANDEZ
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

AID/DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/12

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, EAID, VE

SUBJECT: APURE'S IN DIRE STRAITS, BUT POLITICALLY CALM

LEGISLATURE PRESIDENT CRISPIN LARA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 02957 02 OF 02 241550Z

6. (U) APURE'S STATE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAS SEVEN MEMBERS: THREE ADECOS ELECTED FROM THE DISTRICTS, THREE MVRS ELECTED BY THE LIST METHOD, AND ONE SELECTED TO REPRESENT THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION. THE INDIGENOUS LEGISLATOR OF THE PUME TRIBE, CRISPIN LARA, IS PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL. HE DESCRIBED THE HARSH CONDITIONS OF HIS 10,000 CONSTITUENTS, MOST OF WHOM LIVE IN SOME 150 COMMUNITIES NEAR THE OFT-SWOLLEN BANKS OF THE STATES SEVEN MAJOR RIVERS. THESE POPULATIONS, SURVIVING ON SUBSISTENCE FISHING AND SELLING CRAFTS, ARE ALWAYS THE FIRST AND HARDEST HIT BY DISEASE OR THE PERIODIC FLOODING. LARA DECRIED THE PALTRY FUNDS SENT FROM CARACAS TO ADDRESS INDIGENOUS CONCERNS (ONLY ABOUT \$150,000 RECEIVED.) BUT LARA AND HIS STAFF DID SAY THAT CHAVEZ'S HIGHLY TOUTED PLAN BOLIVAR DID REPAIR ROADS AND ENACT BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS IN THE STATE; THE PROBLEM IS THAT, AFTER 2001, THIS PROJECT JUST DRIED UP.

DEFENDING THE PEOPLE

B1

UNCLASSIFIED

COMMENT: FAREWELL, SANTOS LUZARDO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 02957 02 OF 02 241550Z

9. (C) THIS BRIEF VISIT TO APURE'S CAPITAL DEMONSTRATED THAT POLITICAL TENSIONS OUTSIDE CARACAS ARE LOW, EVEN IN THE ONCE-FIERCE "LLANOS" OF ROMULO GALLEGO'S "DONA BARBARA" AND HER RANCH, "EL MIEDO." DESPITE CONSTANT WORRIES THAT THE CHAVISTAS WERE MOUNTING A CONFRONTATION WITH THE OPPOSITION MARCH, NOTHING REMOTELY SIMILAR OCCURRED.

10. (C) WITH OIL, FERTILE LAND, AND ECOLOGICAL ATTRACTIONS, APURE IS A GLARING EXAMPLE OF HOW OVERCENTRALIZATION HAS FAILED IN DEVELOPING VENEZUELA'S OUTLYING REGIONS. ONLY ONE EIGHTEEN-PASSENGER FLIGHT A DAY TREKS FROM CARACAS TO SAN FERNANDO, A TESTAMENT TO LACK OF ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THIS CITY OF 110,000. SAN FERNANDO HAS NO MOVIE THEATERS, NO AMERICAN-STYLE FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS, AND NO MAJOR VENEZUELAN FOOD STORE CHAINS. ALTHOUGH ITS CATTLE PRODUCTION DOES RIVAL THAT OF BETTER KNOWN ZULIA, APURE'S STATE GOVERNMENT, WITH 18,000 EMPLOYEES, IS BY FAR THE LARGEST INDUSTRY.

UNCLASSIFIED

SHAPIRO.

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

UNCLASSIFIED